

Juniper Mountain AIRS Site, Yavapai County

A little history of the two sites involves a major incident and/or searches for each localized area.

On March 21-22, 2009 in Westwood Ranches a residential subdivision located in Coconino County north of Interstate 40 between Ashfork and Seligman a subject fired upon two Coconino County Sheriff's Deputies. Subsequent to the initial incident a large manhunt developed involving officers from Coconino County Sheriff's Office, Yavapai County Sheriff's Office, Arizona Department of Public Safety, US Forest Service and the Flagstaff Police Department SWAP team. The agencies represented three frequency ranges, VHF, UHF, and 800 MHz. Due to the terrain and distance none of the agencies could effectively reach Bill Williams Mtn. that has an AIRS suite to use for interoperable communications. Juniper Mountain located just south of Interstate 40 and 11 miles southwest of Seligman has an AIRS suite however the control point for that suite is at Yavapai County Sheriff's Office in Prescott, Arizona.

The ability for the Police/Sheriff 911 center in Flagstaff to communicate with officers at the scene was pretty limited with communication to just the Coconino Sheriff's officers in the area and that was marginal without some form of localized repeater. Once that communication was set up, it still alienated officers from the other agencies that needed to have interoperable communication (UHF & 800 MHz) through one or more frequency interconnects. The Flagstaff 911 center was not able to effectively contact officers from all the agencies for updates and to effectively maintain a line of communication to those officers from outside the affected area. That issue was never resolved before the culmination of the search and apprehension of the suspect. This area also had marginal cellular coverage that was basically none existent as another communication resource not available for effective use.

Brookbank Communications Site, Navajo County

On January 2, 2009 a man was reported missing in the Forest Lakes residential subdivision, Forest Lakes, Arizona. The man was on an all terrain vehicle and was only going to ride around in the residential subdivision. There was approximately two and a half to three feet of snow on the ground. Mr. Irby never returned home. The subsequent search that was initiated which lasted for 12 days involved the following agencies, the Arizona Department of Public Safety helicopter and field units patrolling State Highway 260, US Forest Service, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office SAR, Gila County Sheriff's Office SAR, Navajo County Sheriff's Office SAR, Pima County Sheriff's Office SAR, Coconino County Sheriff's Deputies and SAR, Forest Lakes Fire, Civil Air Patrol, and CERT Volunteers from Forest Lakes. All of the agencies operated on disparate VHF and UHF radio frequencies. This was a fairly massive ground search involving the immediate subdivision and several miles of surrounding forest area. The search coordinator for Coconino County indicated that communication with the Sheriff's Office 911 center other than through the Coconino County Sheriff's Radio frequency would have been a great asset to other responding agencies allowing for resource direction and management at the outset of the search. Subsequent to a command and control center set up in Forest Lakes that issue was no longer an issue, however the initial response by those agencies would have been greatly enhanced with that communication to the 911 Center in Flagstaff monitoring the search effort. The Arizona DPS Brookbank Communications site facility located approximately one half mile inside the Navajo County line has an AIRS suite setup however the control point for that site is Navajo County Sheriff's Office. There is no communication control of that site by Coconino County to operate other than through localized patrol units with other agencies. The resource of that site for interoperability with other agencies working in Coconino County through the Flagstaff 911 center, and as a backup resource for the Forest Lakes area is extremely important to the localized public safety agencies that respond to police and fire emergencies in Forest Lakes and along State Highway 260.